

the North Atlantic at the turn of the last millennium constituted a crucial first step. These brave voyages under perilous conditions brought a dawning awareness on both sides of the Atlantic that our world is, in fact, many worlds.

There was something profoundly heroic about their desire and their ability to make the crossing. To go across the Atlantic to Vinland was as earthshaking and expansive an achievement as the most expansive, ambitious space launch today. It is indeed fitting that our first expedition to Mars in 1976 consisted of two spacecraft called Viking 1 and Viking 2.

All Americans should know more about this fascinating early chapter of our history. The Viking voyages are an essential part of the long process by which all of us in our different ways came to be here. The legacy of the Vikings has always been with us, from scattered archaeological evidence to the legends that thrilled poets like Longfellow.

These legends have been nurtured especially by the descendants of the Vikings. I don't suppose I can use the term "Viking-Americans," but I do mean people from Norway and Sweden and Finland and Denmark and Iceland, who showed the same courage when they immigrated here in the modern period to build new worlds for themselves. The settlers of places like New Sweden in Delaware; Oslo, Minnesota; Denmark, Iowa; or Holland, North Dakota, all brought a deep love of democracy and freedom stemming from their own egalitarian traditions. In fact, a new National Geographic cites a case where the Prince of the Franks sent an envoy to parlay with a group of invading Vikings and came back saying, "I found no one to talk with. They said they were all chiefs." [Laughter]

Now our awareness of our Nordic past will go far beyond legends and traditions. This exhibition will deepen our knowledge of the rich

history we share. It will shape our future by strengthening the bonds between Americans and their kin in the Nordic nations.

I am grateful for all that we have done together in the last decade, from our support for the peaceful expansion of democracy and freedom in Central and Eastern Europe to our concerted actions in Bosnia and Kosovo. Europe's future has never looked brighter, thanks in no small measure to your contributions.

When we entered the new millennium a few months ago, it was reassuring to dramatize our progress by portraying the year 1000 as a dark time in human history, a time then dominated by fear and superstition. But this exhibition helps to tell a fuller story: that for all the challenges and superstitions men and women faced 1,000 years ago, they still had the daring and enterprise to look beyond the horizon, to begin to build a world that measured up to their imagination. This is an old lesson that always offers fresh inspiration.

It is amazing to me to look at the Viking ships and imagine that they made it all this way 1,000 years ago. And I am so glad that, with the leaders of all these nations here today, you have clearly decided to make this a tradition. And you're welcome back in the year 3000. [Laughter] We are delighted to have you. Welcome. Thank you.

I'd like to now invite His Majesty, the King of Norway, to come and make a few remarks on behalf of all the Nordic nations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to an exhibit at the National Museum of Natural History entitled, "Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga." The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of King Harald V of Norway.

## Remarks Announcing a Gun Buyback Initiative

*April 28, 2000*

Thank you very much. First of all, let me say a word of appreciation to you, Chief Ramsey, for your outstanding leadership of this very fine department. Thank you, Mayor Williams, for the energy and direction you have

brought to city hall and to this entire city. Thank you, Eleanor Holmes Norton, for always advocating for Washington, DC. I think no one will ever know how many times you have called me or been to see me in the last 7 years and 3

months to get me to do something else, how many times you have reminded me that I, for my tenure here, and my wife are citizens of Washington, DC. And I have tried to be a good and faithful citizen, and insofar as we have succeeded, it's in no small measure because of you.

Thank you, Congressman Patrick Kennedy, for being here and for your longstanding concern for reducing crime and violence. And I want to thank DC councilmember Sandy Allen. And I'd like to say a special word of appreciation to our HUD Secretary, Andrew Cuomo, who is here, who has been very, very vigorous in this area. I think no HUD Secretary has ever tried to do as much as he, not only to build and maintain and improve the public housing units of America and to provide more vouchers for people to find their own housing but actually to make that housing safe. And I thank him for that.

I'd like to thank all the members of the DC Police Department who are here for your service, and I'd like to congratulate this class of fine police recruits behind me and thank them for their commitment to the safety of this community.

As Chief Ramsey said, I have tried to be a good partner to law enforcement throughout the country. There are a lot of reasons for that. By the time I got elected President, I'd been involved with law enforcement in one way or another for nearly 20 years. I asked Janet Reno to become Attorney General largely because she'd be the first Attorney General in a long, long time who had actually been a local prosecutor in a fascinating and challenging context, in Dade County in Miami. And we got people together who had been working with local law enforcement officials to write the crime bill in '94 and to pass that Brady bill and to do the other things which have been done. And I hope that it's worked.

Underneath all that, there was something else. I'd actually spent time as a Governor and as a candidate for President looking at places where the crime rate had gone down. And I found, all over America, most people just took it for granted that the crime rate would always go up and that all of you who put on a badge and a uniform every day would always be fighting a losing battle. That's what most people thought back in 1992. And they respected you; they were grateful. They cried when they saw the pictures of the children being shot in the

newspaper, but they basically thought it would go on forever.

I thought it was intolerable. I did not think it was inevitable, and I'd seen enough evidence to know that we could drive the crime rate down.

Now, over the last 7 years, the things we have done together, people in their communities all over the country, have given us the lowest overall crime rate in 25 years, the lowest homicide rate in 30 years, and gun crime alone is down 35 percent since 1993. In Washington, crime is at the lowest level since the early 1970's. Gun crime is half what it was just 5 years ago. And that's a real tribute to the people in the police department and to the people in the community that are working with you.

But as the Mayor said earlier, I don't think there is a soul in America that believes that we're safe enough. And when we remember the Columbine tragedy, when we experience the tragedy of what happened at the zoo here a few days ago, when we pick up the newspaper on any given day, we know that this country can do better.

You know, again I say, in 1992 a lot of people didn't believe that. Now—just look at these numbers—we now know; therefore, we have no excuse for not continuing to do things we know will work, because now we've got the evidence. Yet, 12 young people still die every day from gun violence, about 40 percent of them from accidents and suicide.

Now, as I look ahead—I've asked for a lot of things from this Congress. I've asked them to close the gun show loophole, put child trigger locks on all the guns, to allow us to trace all the guns and bullets used in crimes. I've asked them to ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, which makes a mockery out of our assault weapons ban. I've asked them to give me funds for another 50,000 police officers to put them in the highest crime neighborhoods. But I've also asked them to give me \$15 million, which is not much in the context of the Federal budget, to support Secretary Cuomo's gun buyback initiative.

Now, I want to talk about this a little bit, and this is not in my notes, but I think we need to make the sale here. Because I can tell you what the people in the media are thinking back there. They're saying, "Gosh, there must be a couple hundred million guns in America. What can you buy in DC with a quarter of

a million bucks? What's 3,000—I'm glad you got 3,000 guns last year in a few days, but what does that mean?"

Well, the first thing I want to say is, all those numbers that float around are misleading. A lot of the weapons are in the hand of law enforcement officials, people in the military, and legitimate, honest hunters and sports people. The number of guns that are floating around on the streets in our cities is massive but not a mountain we can't climb.

And I'm doing my best to get the best data I can, and I'm doing some work on that—I was hoping I would have it ready by today, but I don't—because Eleanor and the Mayor, when I called them after that terrible tragedy at the zoo and asked them what I could do to help, they said, "Well, why don't you help our gun buyback program?" And that's why we're all here today, because we want to move now, while people are thinking about this.

But if you just think about this, every one of you knows if you can produce 3,000 guns in Washington, DC, in a couple of days, and you pay people about \$50—they either get a small amount of cash or some sort of gift certificate, and then the guns are destroyed—can you imagine what would happen if, on a per capita basis, that was done in every community in this country? And if we did it a couple of times a year for the next 2 or 3 years, how much that would drive down all these statistics?

And that's why I wanted to come here today. When I talked to the Mayor, I told him, even though we haven't passed our bill through Congress yet, I'd try to go back and get some money. And he told me what he was going to do. So I told him, and I'll tell you, we're going to give \$100,000 through HUD's program to go with what the city is putting up. That will enable you, in this few days, Chief, instead of getting 3,000 guns, to get more than 7,000 guns this year. You can more than double what you did last year. Every one of the guns taken out of circulation could mean one less crime, one less tragedy, one more child's life saved.

Our Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms is also committing today to trace every gun turned in during this buyback period to see if it has been stolen or used in a crime—part of a larger partnership with the DC Police Department to trace the source of every gun used in a crime in this city.

So far, this work we've been doing together has proven extremely effective in shutting down flows of illegal guns coming in here. In one case, officials traced literally dozens of guns, used by gang members and other criminals to commit murder and other crimes here in the District, to a single illegal gun trafficker who originally bought the guns at a gun show in the Midwest where he did not have to undergo a background check. But he is now in jail.

If our budget passes, law enforcement will be able to trace every gun and every bullet used in every gun crime. We'll have more local anticrime efforts like your Operation Cease Fire here. We'll hire more ATF agents and inspectors to crack down on illegal gun traffickers and bad-apple dealers, and more Federal, State, and local prosecutors to help put violent gun criminals where they belong, behind bars.

But I will say again, we also need more prevention. Congress should help us close the gun show loophole, require those safety locks with new handguns, and ban the importation of large capacity ammunition clips.

Now, if we do all this, are we going to stop every gun crime? Of course not. But my answer to those who say, "Well, if you do all this, it wouldn't have stopped this incident or that incident or the other incident"—if we had listened to that kind of argument back in 1992, we would still have the crime rate going up. We didn't put 100,000 police on our streets because we thought it would solve every crime; we just knew it would prevent some and solve others quicker. We didn't pass the Brady bill because we thought it would stop every person with a criminal or other problem in the background from getting a handgun, but we knew it would stop some. It turned out to stop a half million. How many people are alive today because of that? No one knows, but a lot. We didn't ban assault weapons because we thought it would make all the ones that were already out there vanish, but we knew it would make some difference.

And that's the way we need to look at this buyback program and every single one of these issues. The last 7 years should have proved to you, and to every person wearing a uniform in every community in the United States of America, that if we have smart law enforcement, smart prevention, and committed community involvement, we can drive the crime rate down and save people's lives.

You are in a successful enterprise, and you ought to tell everybody that. Amidst all the tragedy and heartbreak and all the people here wearing uniforms who have suffered the loss of their family members and their partners and others, you should take enormous pride. One of the enormous success stories in the last 7 years—right up there with the stock market exploding and the longest economic expansion in history and 21 million new jobs—is that you proved you could bring the crime rate down. And everyone in America is better off because of it. And what that means is, we have no excuse now not to keep doing what works and to do more of it.

And I'll tell you what my goal is. My goal is not the lowest crime rate in 25 years. I want America to be the safest big country in the entire world. And you can do it if we give you the tools to do it.

So that's what this is about. I want you to go out and prove you can pick up another 7,000 guns. I want you to help me pass this program in Congress. And then I want us to go out and use this buyback program to get local government contributions, State government contributions, private sector contributions.

Look, we can buy millions of guns out there. Just think about it: fifty bucks a pop on the average to get millions of guns off the street. I don't know about you, but based on the evidence, I'd say it's worth it.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:06 p.m. at the Maurice T. Turner, Jr., Institute of Police Science. In his remarks, he referred to Chief of Police Charles H. Ramsey and Mayor Anthony A. Williams of the District of Columbia.

## Statement on the Legal Framework Agreement for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil Pipeline

*April 28, 2000*

I am very pleased that today delegations from Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey reached agreement on the legal framework for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline. Last November in Istanbul, I witnessed the signing of initial documents for this framework. Today's achievement completes this work and brings the pipeline project a critical step closer to fruition.

By this action, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey have shown once again their commitment to building regional cooperation, peaceful relations, and better lives for all their people. I congratulate Presidents Aliyev, Shevardnadze, and Demirel, along with all the negotiating teams, for their leadership in moving this project forward.

I look forward to the next phase of this effort, when companies from the United States, West-

ern Europe, and Russia will work with those of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, and Turkey to transform legal frameworks into commercial reality.

The United States is committed to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline as a key part of our overall approach to Caspian energy development. We want to ensure access to world markets for the countries of the region, while helping diversify sources of energy supply for consumers in the United States and around the globe.

NOTE: The statement referred to President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan; President Eduard Shevardnadze of the Republic of Georgia; and President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey.